



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**This is an official
MS Health Alert Network (HAN) – Alert**

MESSAGE ID: MSHAN-20221221-00588-**ALT (Health Alert)**
RECIPIENTS: **All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, PAs, and
Healthcare Providers – Statewide**
Wednesday, December 21, 2022
SUBJECT: **Multistate Norovirus Outbreak Linked to Raw Oysters from Texas**

Dear Colleagues,

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and state health departments, including the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), are investigating a multistate outbreak of cases of confirmed and probable norovirus associated with the consumption of raw oysters from harvest area TX-1 in Texas.
- The contaminated oysters were harvested between November 17, 2022, and December 7, 2022, from harvest area TX 1, Galveston Bay, Texas.
- The oysters were distributed to restaurants and retailers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, **Mississippi**, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.
- As of December 15, 2022, an estimated 211 cases of illness have been reported that are linked to these raw oysters. See CDC [Multistate Norovirus Outbreak Linked to Raw Oysters from Texas | CDC](#)
- The FDA distributed an advisory on December 15, 2022 advising restaurants to not sell the potentially contaminated oysters and consumers to not eat raw oysters harvested in this timeframe from TX 1, and contact their healthcare provider if symptoms develop (see [FDA Advises Restaurants, Retailers and Consumers to Avoid Potentially Contaminated Oysters from Harvest Area TX 1, Texas | FDA](#))
- As of December 20, 2022, at least 7 cases (one confirmed, 6 probable) have been reported in Mississippi linked to eating raw oysters from 3 separate Mississippi restaurants, with dates of consumption ranging from December 4-8, 2022.
- **Additional cases are likely to be identified in Mississippi.**

Norovirus Basics

- Symptoms primarily include the acute onset of diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, and cramping, often associated with fever.
- The typical incubation period ranges from 12-48 hours after exposure, with a short duration of illness, usually 1-3 days.
- Laboratory diagnosis is primarily through RT-PCR of stool specimens. Multiplex gastrointestinal platforms that identify multiple enteric pathogens are more broadly available and can also detect norovirus.
- RT-PCR and Next-Generation Sequencing testing for norovirus is available at the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory (MPHL).

Recommendations

- Physicians and providers should suspect norovirus in individuals with acute diarrhea and/or vomiting who have a history of recent consumption of raw oysters.
- Providers should report cases of suspected norovirus potentially **associated with raw oyster consumption** to the MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725.

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- Norovirus testing is recommended for these individuals.
- Mississippi providers may submit samples to the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory (MPHL) from patients **only if there is a link to consumption of raw oysters**, as follows:
 - Positive norovirus stools done through your clinic from multiplex testing for additional characterization testing (Next-generation sequencing). The original stool specimen is requested (see storage and transport directions below).
 - If norovirus testing is unavailable at your location, you may submit stool specimens collected from ill patients with confirmed consumption of raw oysters within the past 3 days for diagnostic testing by RT-PCR for Norovirus detection
 - Only norovirus positive samples in patients linked to raw oysters, or stool specimens from individuals with suspected norovirus linked to raw oysters, will be accepted at this time.
 - **Prior approval from the Office of Epidemiology is required for sample submission to the MPHL.**
- See specimen submission guidelines below.

Specimen	Submit a minimum of one (1) mL of raw stool in a sterile container with no preservatives or media and a screw cap lid (i.e. sterile urine cup). Label the outside of the specimen minimally with the patient's name, date of birth, and date of collection.
Storage and transport	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refrigerate (2–8°C) specimens within an hour of collection. 2. Refrigerated specimens must be shipped on cold packs in a cooler that is inside a rigid box and sent to the MPHL as a Category B infectious substance. Triple pack the specimens using the following procedure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Place specimen in a biohazard bag. b. Place the specimen in the sealed biohazard bag into a leakproof secondary bag (a second biohazard bag or a Ziplock bag). c. Place sealed specimen bag into a Styrofoam cooler containing frozen cold packs. Close the lid and place the Styrofoam cooler inside the sturdy box. If the box does not fit tightly, place additional material to fill the extra space. d. Place paperwork inside the cooler in a sealed water-proof bag. a. Specimens must be kept cold with cold ice packs. Several cold ice packs should be used to ensure specimens remain cold during transport to MPHL 3. Pre-packaged specimens may be delivered directly to the MPHL or can be dropped off at a local MSDH clinic for overnight delivery to the MPHL. Specimens should be shipped within 24 hours of collection.
Submission information	A MPHL Clinical Specimen Submission Requisition must accompany each specimen. Please select the following test: Molecular (Epi Approval Required), Norovirus PCR. The requisition can be found at https://msdh.ms.gov/page/resources/15201.pdf .
Shipping Address	Mississippi Public Health Laboratory Attn: Molecular Diagnostics Section 570 East Woodrow Wilson Drive Jackson, MS 39216

Please call the MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725 with questions or concerns

Regards,

Paul Byers, MD
State Epidemiologist



Alerting Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency:	Mississippi State Department of Health
Alerting Program:	MS Health Alert Network (MSHAN)
Message Identifier:	MSHAN-20221221-00588- ALT
Program (HAN) Type:	Health Alert
Status (Type):	Actual ()
Message Type:	Alert
Reference:	MSHAN-00588
Severity:	Unknown
Acknowledgement:	No
Sensitive:	Not Sensitive
Message Expiration:	Undetermined
Urgency:	Undetermined
Delivery Time:	600 minutes

Definition of Alerting Vocabulary and Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency:	A unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.
Alerting Program:	The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.
Message Identifier:	A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation (MSHAN-yyymmdd-hhmm-TTT (ALT=Health Alert , ADV=Health Advisory , UPD=Health Update , MSG/INFO=Message/Info Service)).
Program (HAN) Type:	Categories of Health Alert Messages.
Health Alert:	Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
Health Advisory:	Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
Health Update:	Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
Health Info Service:	Provides Message / Notification of general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.
Status (Type):	
Actual:	Communication or alert refers to a live event
Exercise:	Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
Test:	Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded
Message Type:	
Alert:	Indicates an original Alert
Update:	Indicates prior alert has been Updated and/or superseded
Cancel:	Indicates prior alert has been cancelled



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Reference: For a communication or alert with a Message Type of “Update” or “Cancel”, this attribute contains the unique Message Identifier of the original communication or alert being updated or cancelled. “n/a” = Not Applicable.

Severity:

Extreme:	Extraordinary threat to life or property
Severe:	Significant threat to life or property
Moderate:	Possible threat to life or property
Minor:	Minimal threat to life or property
Unknown:	Unknown threat to life or property

Acknowledgement: Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required (Yes or No).

Sensitive:

Sensitive:	Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
Not Sensitive:	Indicates non-sensitive content

Message Expiration:

Undetermined.

Urgency:

Undetermined. Responsive action should be taken immediately.

Delivery Time:

Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert (15, 60, 1440, 4320 minutes (.25, 1, 24, 72 hours)).